

March 28, 2009

Congressman Joe Sestak held an event today at Springfield Country Club where he brought together hundreds of small business people from his District to connect and meet with key people from various local, state and federal agencies and contractors. Boeing was there with a helicopter parked in front of the building for viewing and tours. NASA, State, DRPA, and dozens of other agencies were able to connect directly with hundreds of small business managers and owners with no "gatekeepers."

Several of the business persons echoed the usefulness of the event to me saying how difficult it can be to discover the proper person to contact with each agency and/or business to develop a working relationship. By bringing everyone together under one roof Congressman Sestak has greatly facilitated the process for his constituents.

This is a great idea and one he also did a year and a half ago. That first effort had 440 attendees and this year it grew to well over 900. The ballroom was indeed crowded with people making contacts, getting computer discs filled with key information and also being able to speak with experts in aiding small businesses develop export markets.

As if that weren't enough Sestak also secured Mark Zandi, Chief Economist for Moody's and Lt. Gen. Mark Shackleford as speakers. Zandi spoke at length about the economy and predicted tough times through this year before recovery beginning next year and continuing until 2013 or 2014 before we return to full employment. I'll have video of this early next week.

Each Congressional District should be conducting such seminars and meetings to bring their business constituents together with vendors, cutting through much of the red tape involved with connecting with the right people. In these economic times the opportunity to find new markets is essential. Joe Ceballos of the U.S. Export Assistance Service spoke with the press with two small business owners who have developed nice foreign market niches. John Juzbasich of Merit Systems LLC talked about his efforts in Liberia and the knowledge he has gained in trading with West African nations. His company is sending significant aid to war torn Liberia in the form of children's clothing, shoes and books. Alix Kocher of Neilsen Kellerman of Boothwyn spoke about developing export markets in Europe for her company's rowing/sculling electronics. Working with agencies such as the U.S. Export Assistance Agency tells her where markets exist, aid with translations, understanding foreign cultures and traditions and innumerable other obstacles facing small businesses expanding overseas.

Congressman Sestak is to be commended for his ideas to bring these people together. He has already managed to increase small business' share of federal contracts in his District through these efforts. His staff is also to be commended for organizing and putting together such an excellent event.

John Morgan

<http://thepennsylvaniaprogressive.com/showDiary.do?diaryId=1267>